

# **IOANNIS A. LOUGARIS: FROM AN IMMIGRANT BOY OF YESTERDAY TO THE YOUTH OF TODAY**

Interviewee: Ioannis A. Lougaris

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## **Description**

Emigration to the United States from Greece was chiefly a movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During these decades Greece waged a crusade for the union of Crete, Macedonia, and the Aegean Islands, yet despite the local nationalism, thousands of enterprising peasants despaired of life on the land and made their way to seaports from which they sailed for the United States. The straightforward and unadorned story of Ioannis Lougaris typifies the peasant exodus and the Greek experience in the New World.

Mr. Lougaris was born in 1887 in a rural community in Greece. An immigrant to the United States in 1907, he, like millions of others before him, discovered in America a completely different life style than that to which he was accustomed. He worked at a number of jobs in New York, Chicago, across the continent and on the Pacific coast; served in the United States Army during the First World War; and arrived finally in Nevada in 1920. Through diligence and hard work, Lougaris studied for and passed the bar examination in Nevada. He then became an attorney, with a thriving practice in Reno. Active in civic affairs, he was important in obtaining legislation for the Veterans Administration Hospital at Reno.

This reminiscence by Ioannis A. Lougaris covers his life as a new immigrant in the United States; activities in the San Francisco Bay area; World War I experiences; business and civic affairs at Carson City and Reno; and a philosophical conclusion.



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An Oral History Conducted by Mary Ellen Glass

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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## PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber  
Director, UNOHP  
July 2012

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## INTRODUCTION

Ioannis A. Lougaris was born in 1887, in a rural community in Greece. An immigrant to the United States in 1907, he, like millions of others before him, discovered in America a completely different life from that to which he was accustomed. He worked at a number of jobs in New York, Chicago, across the continent and on the Pacific Coast; served in the United States Army during the first World War; and arrived finally in Nevada in 1920. Through diligence and hard work, Lougaris studied for, and passed the Bar examination in Nevada. He then became an attorney, with a thriving practice in Reno. Active in civic affairs, he was important in obtaining legislation for the Veterans Administration Hospital at Reno. Because of this interesting background, Mr. Lougaris was invited to participate in the Oral History Project of the University of Nevada Center for Western North American Studies. He accepted readily, and was a cooperative and interesting subject through the two interviews in the autumn of 1963. The reminiscence by Ioannis A. Lougaris covers his life as a new immigrant in the

United States; activities in the San Francisco Bay area; World War I experiences; business and civic affairs at Carson City and Reno, and a philosophical conclusion. Professor Wilbur Shepperson's scholarly introduction explains the studies of the immigrant experience, and places Lougaris' activities in the framework of those studies.

The Oral History Project of the Center for Western North American Studies attempts to preserve the past and the present for future research by tape recording and transcribing the reminiscences of persons who have played important roles in the development of Nevada and the West. Scripts are deposited in the Nevada and the West Collection of the University of Nevada Library. Permission to cite or quote from Mr. Lougaris' oral history may be obtained from the Center for Western North American Studies.

Mary Ellen Glass  
University of Nevada, 1966



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## SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

Studies of ethnic groups and of individuals who migrated to the United States from southern and eastern Europe are long overdue. Traditionally, most of the detailed immigration accounts have tended to emphasize the experience of northern and western Europeans and only recently has the record of the Greek experience in and contribution to America received objective treatment. The first attempt to write about the Greeks in scholarly fashion was made by Henry Pratt Fairchild in *Greek Immigration to the United States* (1911). Unfortunately, Fairchild's work was derogatory and even abusive, it revealed little effort to understand either the people or the immigration movement. Perhaps not until Theodore Saloutos published his *The Greeks in the United States* in 1964 can it be said that the Greek immigration was carefully evaluated and the overall phenomenon placed in perspective.

Immigration to the United States from Greece was chiefly a movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During these decades Greece waged a crusade

for the union of Crete, Macedonia, and the Aegean Islands, yet despite the local nationalism thousands of enterprising peasants despaired of life on the land and made their way to sea ports from which they sailed for the United States.

The straightforward and unadorned story of Ioannis Lougaris typifies the peasant exodus and the Greek experience in the New World. Mr. Lougaris' activities in New York and Chicago were not uncommon. His employment by the railroad and his transport to the West Coast in a freightcar was the pattern of Americanization followed by many newly arrived Greeks. However, from the time of his arrival in Sacramento Mr. Lougaris' story becomes personal, individualized, and unique. But whether typical or unique the unpretentious, simple, and harmonious life which blended into the American stream helps us to reconstruct the lives of the forgotten thousands who have helped to build the nation.

Wilbur S. Shepperson, Professor of History  
University of Nevada, 1966



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## A GREEK IMMIGRANT IN AMERICA

The reason I left Greece was due to the great poverty existing at that time in my home town. My parents had four sons and their property—they didn't have enough sufficient food or clothing to support even themselves. That was the condition existing there. That was in Lithakia, Zante, Greece. I saw no future for my life. I had some correspondence with a Greek man in New Jersey telling me all about the United States, so I decided to come to America.

My education in Greece was grammar school and two years of high school. That's all the education I had. I was taken out from high school by my father, because he couldn't afford to send me farther to school and I worked at various farms for one franc a day. In American money, that was 10¢ at that time. Such was the poverty in Greece in 1907.

My father, in order to give me \$100 to come to America, had to mortgage 5 1/2 acres of land, one burro, and one goat at 20% interest payable within six months. Otherwise, he would lose everything. I didn't have shoes to wear until I came to the United States. That is, when I left Patras, Greece, for

the United States. Such poverty then existed in Greece.

I took the boat from Patras, Greece to Naples, Italy. Then I changed the boats from there to an Italian freighter named Italy. It was a steamer, but it was changed to immigration because the immigration that came to the United States was very heavy—over a million immigrants came to the United States. During that year I got an accommodation in steerage with hundreds of others. It took us 31 days from Naples to reach New York.

I never thought we'd ever see land. However, one morning I woke up and we saw the land of the United States. I was more impressed with the big buildings of New York than I was in anything else.

The only worry I had was whether I would pass the physical examination. However, they took us to a place where all the immigrants went, Ellis Island, and kept me there 24 hours. I went through physical examination fine. I made 100 per cent. I saw many immigrants turned back home because they could not pass the examination.

I had only five English gold pounds out of \$100. They took—when I say “they,” I mean one of the officers of immigration—a pound and gave me a sack full of bologna, bread, an orange, an apple and gave me the change back. From there I went to New York.

When I was in New York, there was kind of a Greek island there. They had coffee houses there like they had in Greece and the food was very cheap—10¢ for stew, soup, and desert afterwards. I ate with them. I couldn’t speak the English language, naturally, so I had to associate with Greeks. There was no other way you could do it. Most of them worked in various places. Most of them spoke a little bit of English. I couldn’t speak a word when I came to New York. Naturally, I had to learn English to make a living.

The first thing I was looking for was to get a job. I made inquiries among the Greeks. They told me that there was a job to sell peanuts on the streets of New York, so I saw the boss. He had about eighteen Greeks in a basement on 32nd and 1st Avenue. He hired me and gave me a pushcart. I worked 12 hours a day from noon till midnight—\$4.50 a week and meals. I’d sleep in the basement among the other 18 Greeks. I worked there for about 10 days, but the policemen were chasing me from one corner to another—using the words, “Move, Greek. Move, Greek.” I got disgusted, took the pushcart back to the owner and I quit. Then I took my little bag and an overcoat, and walked to the Brooklyn Bridge. I went to West Orange, New Jersey, where a friend of mine with whom I had correspondence, previously lived.

I got to the United States March 7, 1907. I went to New Jersey to talk to my friend. In 1907, there was a panic in the United States, and no money in circulation. Anyone who was working, they would give him a little receipt and when you cashed it, you had

to give a 25% commission. I couldn’t get a job. The only factory there was the Edison Phonograph Company. I lined up every day for five days—get up early in the morning to be in the front of the employment office. I can never forget the person who came out every morning about 8 o’clock. He had a long, hooked nose, and he curled his finger to call maybe five or six people. I couldn’t get a job.

One night I couldn’t sleep and it came to my mind, “I’m in America and I must be like Americans.” I had a mustache at that time. I had a Greek suit, Greek shoes, so I thought I’d better cash that English pound and buy some clothes and be Americanized and see if that way I can get a job. First, I went to a Greek barbershop and for 10¢ I got a shave and haircut. I told the barber to shave my mustache and comb my hair in the middle. The next store was a Jewish second-hand shop selling clothes and hats and shoes, so I got a blue suit, derby hat, American shoes, American shorts, a bow tie, and dressed up like a million dollars. Next morning at the Edison Phonograph Company, I was the first one in the space at that door where the man was. And, as soon as he come out, I took my hat and said, “Good morning.” I knew how to speak a few words then. I got the job. He called me first.

I worked in there on a 12 hour a day shift for \$5.25 a week. The heat was so extreme making those records that one morning I woke up and I was in the infirmary—I had fainted. So I decided to quit.

I had another Greek friend in Kankakee, Illinois. He was some kind of foreman in a gang working for the Rock Island Railroad, among a bunch of other Greeks. I talked to him; he said he had a job open. I took the train and went to Kankakee, Illinois, and I got a job with the Rock Island Railroad.



I was a water boy. I carried two water buckets on my back for half a mile, sometimes more, to give water to those who were employed on the “extra gang” on the railroad tracks. I worked there until last part of October, 1907. Then, no more job; all laid off.

I went to Chicago Heights, Illinois. We rented a house among other Greeks and we figured to spend the winter there and the next summer to go back to work. I wasn’t satisfied with the conditions, and I heard that some Greek foreman was hiring some Greeks to go to California to work for the Southern Pacific Railroad. I went to Chicago and met him and I told him that I was working for the Rock Island Railroad and I’d be interested in the job. He hired me among other 18 Greeks. It seems like that 18 number was the lucky one, I guess.

When I made the contact to be sent to Sacramento to make a living working for the railroad, the street named Halstead in Chicago was the Greek island and there were quite a few thousand Greeks there. I believe many of the old-time Greeks still live in there or around there. I didn’t stay long there because most of the time after I left Kankakee, Illinois from the Rock Island Railroad, I stayed in Chicago Heights until I got the job and shipped out to Sacramento.

We took a freight and it took us exactly eleven days to go from Chicago to Sacramento. We slept in the freight cars, of course. We got to Sacramento and we were met by the railroad foreman there and were ready to be sent on railroad gangs. At that time, the Southern Pacific was building a railroad out there from Sacramento, Marysville and Chico.

I did not want to work for the railroad any more, but I didn’t know how to get out because I had heard that I was sold for \$1 to this Southern Pacific Railroad Company. All of the Greeks were sold—\$1 each. The person

who selected us to send us to work on the extra gang of laborers got a dollar each!

So I schemed right away, and commenced to cry. That surprised me—the great mental power that can affect the body of a human being. I was crying. Tears came down my cheeks. I said I had pain in my stomach, but I didn’t have any more pain in my stomach than I got right now. Finally, the foreman said, “All right. You go down there.” It was to the outside toilets. It was about 300 yards. He kept my little bag, kept my hat, kept my overcoat. So I went down to the toilet, and as soon as I saw his back turned, I beat it for Sacramento just as fast as I could.

At that time the San Francisco Electric Railroad was operating from San Francisco to Sacramento. There was an electric train there. I jumped in the train, asked the conductor how soon the train left and he said, “A few minutes.” That few minutes I thought was a century, because I was afraid they would come pick me up and take me back to the railroad track again. When the train started for San Francisco, I thought I was in Paradise. That’s the truth.

I arrived in San Francisco, and I went again to look for the Greeks. However, by that time I spoke better English. I got a room at 388 Third Street, San Francisco. Then, I heard that a big nightclub was opened on Fourth and Market Street, called the Bismarck Cafe.

The owners of that club were Otto Miller and Sons. I applied for a job there and they hired me to work and clean up the cuspidors and toilets. I had one chair for a shoe shine. I worked there from 11 o’clock a.m. to 1 o’clock a.m. However, the hours between 2:00 in the afternoon and 4:00 in the afternoon off.

As soon as I got the job, I was making quite big tips. I shined shoes there and I had some towels, too. The Germans came in. (It was a German place.) They would wash their

hands, and I had some liquid for the hands, and they gave me pretty good tips. They were good tipplers.

I advertised in the San Francisco Examiner— “A young foreign boy wants to find a room in a private home where it would be an opportunity to learn the English language.” I received several letters. One afternoon, I went to the first house. They asked me, “What nationality are you?” I said, “Greek.” “We don’t want no Greeks.” I went to seven homes and I was turned down. They didn’t want Greeks.

Finally, I took the streetcar in San Francisco to Castro Street. At 744 Castro Street, San Francisco, I rang the bell and the lady came out. She said, “What nationality are you?” I said, “I’m Russian.” She said, “Come in.” I rented a room there and stayed with the family for two years. Their name was Mr. and Mrs. Frank C. Fry. They’re both dead now. She taught me the English for an hour and a half for every afternoon. She always told me, “Why don’t you get some Russian dictionaries so I can show you the difference?” My answer was, “No, I want to learn it the American way,” because I was afraid to tell I was Greek.

Mrs. Fry didn’t know that I was Greek until a brother of mine wrote me a letter addressed “John A. Lougaris, San Francisco, California.” No other address. The postmaster delivered that letter to 744 Castro Street. How he knew I was living there! I give great credit to the post office department. When that letter was delivered, Mrs. Fry said to the postmaster, “We have no Greek here.” So he said, “Well, you keep this letter and if there’s no Greek, you give it to me and I’ll send it back.” Mrs. Fry left the letter on the table in my room and I read it. When I came down in the morning to go to work, she asked if I was Greek. I admitted I was. She kissed me and she thought I was wonderful. In other words,

I became part of the family— I always called her “Mama” all the time. Indeed, I have a great deal of the family feeling, too. I’m very proud of it. They’re both dead now.

After two years of work at the Bismarck Cafe, I learned my English pretty good and I wanted to quit shining shoes and cleaning cuspidors, so I applied for a job as a bellhop. I went to the employment office and paid \$2, and was sent to be interviewed at the Monroe Hotel at Sacramento and Franklin Streets, San Francisco. The manager at that time was Francis W. Smith and the owners of the hotel were Julius Lavin and Sons, Jewish people. I was hired. My job there was to clean up the parlor, operate the elevator, and the switchboard. I shined shoes for those people that wanted to be shined and did general service work. It was difficult for me to obtain the telephone numbers and particularly the names on the switchboard, but there was a girl there by the name of Miss O’Keefe. She was very sweet and taught me how to operate the switchboard. After a month or so, I did pretty well—I knew how to do it.

I must say that the Jewish people in that hotel were the most kind, most philanthropic people I ever met in my life. They were good to me. I worked there from 1909 to 1911—two years—and during that time I never bought shoes or a hat, or clothes of any kind. All of them were given to me as a gift at Christmas. During the week days they were always generous with their tips. I’m most grateful to them because at that time, really, I needed the job pretty bad.

Francis W. Smith, the manager, was very nice. His wife was very charming. I remember them very well. They had a little girl by the name Frances, a student. Every morning it was my duty to take her to school by the hand and pick her up again and bring her to the hotel. I worked there for about two years, then

I was offered a better job for more money at the Hotel Richelieu.

Hotel Richelieu was situated at Van Ness Avenue and Geary Street. J.B. Brunn was the manager. That hotel was operated on American Plan, as was the Monroe Hotel. It served merchants in San Francisco like the Liebs, I remember, the Cohns of the Emporium, and many other Jewish names. I worked there from 1911 to 1913 and then I was offered a job at the Hotel Oakland, Oakland, California, as a bellboy.

That Hotel Oakland was the social hotel in the bay cities. The manager was Victor Rieder and the owner was Jurgensen. I became bellhop number one there. I worked in that hotel until I went into the service.

I enlisted in the service for following reasons: I saw that many young boys went to war and I felt, "Why shouldn't I go, too? After all, I became an American citizen in 1915. Life was very good to me, notwithstanding a lot of hardships I went through. I should do my duty." So I enlisted December 17, 1917.

I went to Camp Lewis. At that time I met John V. Mueller, who built a Reno hotel called Holiday with the other associates. I became acquainted with Mr. Mueller. I was transferred then to 4th Division, Camp Greene, North Carolina. We stayed in Camp Greene, North Carolina about two months.

Then we went to Hoboken, New Jersey, and from there we went Bordeaux, France, in boats. One ship was torpedoed in the middle of the Atlantic—not our boat, though. It was another boat. The submarine was destroyed by the guns of the United States Navy. There were 15 big ships which transferred troops to France. To the right and the left and the front and the back there was nothing but battleships for protection.

We arrived in Bordeaux and my first battle was the Chateau Thierry offensive. We

fought there pretty hard and lost a lot of men. Then I was transferred to Cantingee, France, fighting among the British troops. They were very nice troops and very fine soldiers. The reason I regretted very much to be with them was that they'd feed me nothing but tea in the morning and tea in the night—no coffee. However, I didn't stay very long with them. I was transferred to the organized end—the American army in France under General John J. Pershing.

Then after the Ais Maine offensive, we went direct to San Mihiel offensive. We fought the San Mihiel offensive. Then we were transferred to the Meuse Argonne offensive. On September 26, the big battle was opened. I fought there with the American troops until October 18. Then we were relieved by the Fifth Division, but the Fifth Division didn't seem to do so very good, so we had to come back again to hold the lines.

Finally, when the Fifth Division was organized, we were released. Some of us left—I believe out of the headquarters company of which I was corporal, 140 or 130 came back. Then we were sent to Montfaucon for rest for two weeks. Then the 4th Division was fill-in for new troops, and back to the fire line again.

On the 10th day of November, I was shot. I was taken to the hospital in San Jose, France. The gun wound was very clean, so inside of a month and a half or thereabouts, I was pretty well. The commander there wanted to evacuate me to the United States. I refused because General Pershing at that time promised that the divisions that fought in France would be marched up the Fifth Avenue in New York to receive the honors. Naturally, I wanted to be among them. I requested that I join my division who were occupying at that time on the Rhine. I went with my division back to Campenitch, Germany. We stayed there until July 19. I had a relapse and was

taken to an evacuation hospital in Coblenz. I was operated on there, and they took 2,000 centimeters of my left lung. Then I evacuated again to San Jose, France, from there to a boat and the boat to Newport News, Virginia and from there to the Lettermann Hospital in San Francisco.

Although I was not feeling very well, I requested discharge from the service because I had an offer at that time by a friend of mine with the name of Nick Malouhos, now deceased, to go into business with him in Chicago. I was discharged "in good health," understanding I was not, but that's the only way I could be discharged.

I immediately went to Chicago and started business with this man, Nick Malouhos. I had to work pretty hard, because the place was selling fruits, candies, cigars, sandwiches; all things in a general store. The work was very hard, but we were making good money.

Finally, I had a relapse and I was taken to the United States Marine Hospital at 4141 Clarendon Avenue. I'll never forget the number in Chicago. After examinations, the doctor determined that I had tuberculosis. I stayed there until the last part of February in 1920. Dr. Hansen, the chief medical officer of that institution, told me that there was nothing else that they could do for me, and the best thing for me was to get out and have a good time. He told me I was a young man and I might live 30 days, 6 months, a year, or I might live for good. "Go have a good time while you're young."

At that time a permanent and totally disabled veteran with a service connected disability would get only \$30 a month. However, the American Legion organized and the Johnson-Sweet Bill was enacted. In this Act every disabled veteran who was permanently and totally disabled was entitled \$80 a month instead of \$30. It was made

retroactive from the time he got sick, so I got a check of close to \$800.

I took the train to go to Oakland where I was enlisted, and where I knew a lot of people and could enjoy myself with Greek people and so forth. But the train stopped here in Sparks, Nevada, March 1, 1920. It was such a beautiful day—I was breathing better and I was walking around. The trains at that time would sit for an hour and an hour and a half to refuel.

I saw a very handsome man about six foot high and I said, "Mister, what town is this?" He said, "This is Sparks, Nevada." I said, "What is the population of this town?" He said to me, "It is approximately about 900 people." I said to him, "Is there any other town bigger than this?" He said, "Reno's three miles below." I said, "What is the population of Reno?" "11,000." Later, I found out that the gentleman was Charles B. Henderson, United States Senator from Nevada. He later became chairman of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation of the United States. Then, I made up my mind to stop in Reno.

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## EARLY LIFE IN NEVADA

I got off the train in Reno and got a room at 560 Lake Street, Reno. I immediately looked for Greeks, naturally. Pete Cladianos at the time was operating the Economy Market, number 6 East Commercial Row. I asked for a job. He give me a job for \$75 a month. I worked there for a few months, but I wasn't very satisfied.

I had a friend in San Francisco by the name of Joseph Meyer, an Alsatian. When I was bellboy at the Hotel Oakland, I got him a job as a waiter and he had never forgotten me. He was anxious to go into business with me. He thought I had quite a good mind to go into business. Well, I was broke. I had a little money set up, but I didn't want to spend the money. He said he would put the money, so I told him, "Let me go look around and see what we can do."

I went to Carson City. The Virginia and Truckee Railroad was operating at that time—five or six trains a day. I saw a vacant stall in the Arlington block. The owner of that part of the Arlington block was Mrs. Brauer. She owned at that time, also the Carson Hot

Springs. William Maxwell was the manager of the Arlington Hotel. I asked Bill Maxwell how much was the rent and he said, "35 a month." I wrote to Mr. Meyer and he came out with \$1200. We went to Carson, slept in the hotel there, got the lease, and on July 19, 1920, we opened our banana stand there.

We were doing good business, because we had a good store and we were buying wholesale from Mr. Cladianos in Reno. We spread out the goods there, and I was selling pretty cheap and good stuff. Mound House at that time was going full blast with the cement company. Virginia City was booming, so we were doing very good business.

In 1922, Mr. Meyer's wife inherited some money from her mother in Pasadena, California. He didn't want to stay long there. We had a little Ford delivery truck. He said to me, "Johnny, you keep the banana stand. I'll take the Ford and we'll both be square."

So he left, and then I hired Joseph McKenzie, known now as "Specs" McKenzie, who is chairman of the Washoe County Commissioners. He worked for me there



as clerk and stock man. Grant Bowen, now District Judge, was my delivery boy. He didn't stay very long, because he didn't like the job. However, Joe McKenzie stayed with me until the last part of 1922. Then I got sick again.

I had another relapse, so I closed out my banana stand and I went on vacation in Oakland and rested until the following March, 1923. Then I returned to Carson City again and re-opened the store. Still, I couldn't do much work.

During that time, according to the doctors, I had active pulmonary tuberculosis. The nurse came to visit me twice a week to take my pulse—everything. I was very weak, so I thought that I should take some vocational training under government regulations. At that time, a World War I veteran, if he was disabled and unable to follow his previous occupation, the government, at its own expense, would educate the veteran to establish himself.

I applied to the Stanford University Law School. You might ask me “Why? When you didn't have either grammar, high school, or college education in the United States would you want to be a lawyer?” My reason was this—I was very active at that time in the Republican Party in Carson City. I was elected once or twice as a delegate to the state convention. I made the speeches and I wanted to be a speech maker. The diagnostic center of the United States was at Palo Alto, California. They sent three men to examine my brain. They had two hours in the morning, an hour and a half in the afternoon. This was in 1923, around April. They advised me that they would notify me in a few days, which they did.

About a week later, I received a letter from this board as follows: “Dear Mr. Lougaris, We regret to advise you that your application to enter the law school has been rejected for

the following reasons: You never had any grammar school education in the United States; you never had high school education in the United States; and you never even had college education in the United States, prerequisites to enter this university. And, as a matter of fact, you have not the intelligence of a twelve-year-old boy.” I think I still have that letter. Naturally, I gave up. However, they suggested that I should go raise chickens and eggs. They would help me out that way.

I returned to Carson City after I had talked with them, and before I received their letter. Within ten days after I received the letter from the board, I received a card in my box in Carson City. “If you sign your name and address, you will receive good news.” I signed my name and mailed the card back. Then about a week later, I was bombarded with literature from the American Correspondence School of Law, Chicago, Illinois.

The first few letters I threw in the basket. I said to myself, “Well, I was turned down and they were right. I didn't have the proper education.” But the letters were so enthusiastic. They were so inspiring, particularly on the history of the United States of America. I could never forget that. The great Americans who created the Constitution of the United States, the Bill of Rights, the works of Nathan Hale who had only one life to give for America, and many other distinguished Americans. But I said to myself, “Why not take this course? If I don't make the grade, I will still learn pretty good English. So, I sent my check for \$225. The whole fee was for \$225, paid either monthly or all at once.

For 36 months I studied. They sent me a questionnaire twice a month which contained 24 questions. Those questions had to be found in the books they sent me. They, the school, sent me the books—15 volumes of Blackstone's Commentaries of England,

the British common law, which have been adopted in the United States by many states.

I worked a great deal, not only because I had the ambition to become an attorney, but at the same time I saw that selling fruits and vegetables was against my health. Necessity made me do that. I had to do it, but I had the ambition, also, to do it. I studied very hard.

After 36 months, I applied to take the bar examination. At the time, there was Judge Coleman, Judge Sanders, and Judge Ducker. God bless them; they were very fine judges. I was with another four members, who later were to become members of the bar, namely, Tom Rutherford, deceased; D. W. Priest, deceased; Fred Alward, former Lt. Governor; John Shaw Field, who is now a practicing attorney in Reno; and a man named Jeffers. He died, too. After two days oral examination by the Supreme Court, we were all turned down. We didn't qualify to be admitted to practice law. Naturally, I was disheartened, because with my heart and soul I was dedicated to books.

I started over again. I studied another 16 months. I used to go down by the Carson River and make speeches to the water, trying to improve my English language.

I finally gained another application to take the bar examination for a second time. And God bless his soul, Joseph Meyer, my former partner, came for three months before I took the bar examination to help me out in the store so I would have my mind in peace to study hard. Finally, I took the bar examination and I was admitted to practice law in the state. I held my fruit store until the last part of 1927. I was admitted on April 4th, 1927.

This number seven has some history in my life. I would like to digress for a minute to tell how. I was born December 17, 1887. I arrived in the United States March 7, 1907. I went to war December 17, 1917. I broke the

ground of the Veteran's Hospital in Nevada December 17, 1937.

Well, I sold my banana stand to Mr. Chester Newman. I moved to Reno and I am still practicing my profession. I have not made a great success in practicing law. I have not become a great lawyer, but I have made the effort and I am satisfied with that.

I must say that while I was in business in Carson City, the people were so nice. I believe the finest people in America were in Carson City. There was no poverty there, regardless. There was Kings Daughters or Kings something which would take care of any of the needs of the people. The population, I believe, was around 1500 or 1800. I contributed the best I could to the churches and other organizations—sometimes money, sometimes boxes of apples, sometimes a bunch of bananas when they gave parties. But I say again that the finest American people at that time were residing in Carson City. I have no words to express to them for the help and support they gave me in every way. I'm grateful to Carson City and I have a warm spot for Carson City. I shall always have that. I mean this from the bottom of my heart.

I joined the Masonic Lodge over there and they supported me very loyally. I don't remember very many people there. I remember Bill Maxwell. When I was studying law, he always laughed at me. He said, "You make enough here peddling bananas. Why the hell you want to be a lawyer? You can't make it. You never been to school and you can't talk good English." Well, I was studying law in the back of the store there. I met quite a few nice people. Mr. Patterson, in the town, was a clerk of the Federal court. Judge Farrington was a Federal Judge who was so lovely to me. He used to come to my fruit stand after 8:00 at night, because I kept the

store open until about 10 or 11. We would talk about law. Judge Sanders, God bless his soul, always encouraged me. Judge Coleman, another fine jurist, was always very kind to me and told me never to get discouraged. I wish to say now that, all in all, Carson City give me my start—what I am today. I'll never forget the town.

I remember one joke. When I was admitted to practice law, Judge Coleman came to my store and said to me, "Well, Lougaris, how do you feel to be a barrister?" I said to him, "I believe you judges made a mistake to admit me to the bar because I can't read, I can't spell, I can't write the English language. How do you expect me to be successful to practice law?" His answer was, "You have a lot of good common sense and what you don't know, you know where to find it. You'll learn that way. Life in continuous schooling. We all have to learn, so you make good. Don't worry about that. But, do you want the truth?" I said, "Yes, I want the truth." He said, "You sold so many rotten bananas, we want to get rid of you" And he laughed.

I'll never forget that.

Every legislature most of the people came to my store and bought fruits. I did work very hard for Balzar to be elected governor and also for Morley Griswold to be elected lieutenant governor when James Scrugham was defeated. I remember George Hussman, who was an assemblyman and William Dressler, who was the senator. I always attended the legislature to hear speeches and how the laws were created. I was very much interested, and would spend hours and hours listening to the assembly, and then change to the senate. It was inspiring to me the way they conducted the business of the legislature during the time I was there.



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## BUSINESS AND CIVIC AFFAIRS IN RENO

In 1928, I opened my office. In '29 we had crash. I lost all my money. All the money I had saved in Carson City from selling bananas all those years. I didn't know what to do. There was no money at the time, no business at the time, so I thought I'd take the Bar of California examination.

I went down there and maybe I would make a bill of sale once in a while, or a deed, or something, make a few dollars. In Reno, I was living on my compensation from the government and had to borrow money on my war risk insurance. I went to California and took the bar examination and I was admitted to practice law in California. I still am in good standing in California.

In 1930, a Greek gambler was killed by R. H. White. I was retained by the Greek colony in Elko, Nevada to prosecute the man, assisting the district attorney there, Mr. Clark and Joe MacNamara. The case was State of Nevada vs. R. H. White. They had a trial there for 31 days. He was convicted and was sentenced to be gassed. I took a very active part. The defendant's attorney was from

Cantwell and Springmeyer. They appealed to the Supreme Court. In the meantime, Mr. Clark passed away. The Attorney General then, Disken, had a stroke. He was in San Francisco. Joe MacNamara was very ill. I had to do the work to prepare the brief for the Supreme Court on the part of the prosecution. I am now thankful to Nash B. Morgan, my associate then, who did help me a great deal in preparing the brief. Later on, he became assistant district attorney under Ernest S. Brown. Nash B. Morgan was with me for close to five years. He was the most honorable and honest man God ever created. I still have great feeling for Mrs. Morgan and his two daughters, Ruth and Virginia.

I had to be before the Supreme Court to argue the case. The judges of the Supreme Court later decided that he would not disturb the judgment of the jury. White was convicted by his twelve peers and should pay the penalty. Then Cantwell and Springmeyer appealed to the Board of Pardons. At that time, the Board of Pardons consisted of three judges of the Supreme Court, the Attorney General,

and the Governor. I appeared before them. I told them a man had committed an atrocious crime and should pay the penalty. The Board decided that he should be gassed and he was gassed immediately.

I had another case before the Supreme Court. Sam Platt and Sinai were defending in Carson City. A prominent doctor came here from Cleveland, Ohio, and retained me to get his divorce on the grounds of three years separation. They fought very bitterly. Judge Guild ruled in my favor. They appealed to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court sustained the judgment of Judge Guild. Then I had to appear to argue before the Supreme Court.

Another case I had was when Paul Condos, who used to operate the Sierra Furniture Company passed away. He died and left a will in which that will provided certain sums of money to the University of Nevada and certain sums of money to the Archdiocese of the Greek Orthodox Church in North and South America. The will was bitterly contested by his widow. We won this in the district court. The case was appealed to the Supreme Court, and we won the case. I saved the Greek Orthodox Church \$15,000 or \$20,000.

Then I had quite a few estates here and other legal matters, nothing much of importance, but I made a pretty good living.

In 1932, the Economy Act became effective under Roosevelt against the veterans and my compensation was reduced to \$50 per month from \$90 a month. They claimed that my condition, arrested tuberculosis, had become very arrested and that I was entitled to only \$50 a month. I filed an application to go to the veterans hospital in Palo Alto, California. At that time it was the diagnostic center for the western states. That was in 1933. I was sent down there for an examination to

determine my condition. I stayed there three weeks. They were very nice to me. It was good food, good nurses.

At that time, when a veteran was discharged from the hospital, he had to go up before a board of five and they would ask him if he was treated right and if he has any suggestions to make to improve the service of the hospital. So I appeared before the board and was asked by the chairman if I was treated all right, and if I had any suggestions or complaints to make. I told him that the nurses were very sweet and kind and the food was excellent. Colonel Roche at that time was the director of the hospital and he came to see me every day. I had no complaints to make. Did I have any suggestions to improve the service? The service was par excellent.

But looking around, I saw three of those members of the board were the same people that, in 1923, ten years previously, came to examine my brains when I filled out an application for law school. Then they told me I didn't have the English, no grammar school education, no pre-legal education, no college education, that I didn't have the intelligence of a 12-year-old boy. So I saw them at that board and I said to the chairman, "Mr. Chairman, I have one complaint to make." He said, "Tell us. That's the way we improve our service." I said, "Exactly ten years ago, in 1923, I filed application to enter law school. These three gentlemen, one, two, three, came to Reno to examine my brains. They examined my brains and they told me I didn't have a grammar education, which was true, or a college education, which was true, no pre-legal education, which was true, and everything else which was true, but it was not entirely a good examination. Then they told me I didn't have the intelligence of a 12-year-old boy, I kind of resented it! Now, Mr. Chairman for your information, may I present you my

card.” And I handed my professional card that showed I was a member of the American, California, and Nevada bar associations with the main office 118 West Second Street, Reno, Nevada. Then I said, “Good-bye, Gentlemen.”

When I arrived in Reno March 1, 1920, I immediately joined the American Legion. The Commander at that time was T. L. Withers, a Reno attorney, and D. L. Hoyt was the Adjutant. When I went to Carson City, I transferred my membership to Capital Post Number 4 of the American Legion. I took a very active part and I always was very anxious to become the Post Commander. I ran for seven consecutive years for the commandship, and I always was defeated. Finally, in 1927, I was elected Senior Vice Commander when the Commander left. I think he passed away, so by the act of God I became the Commander of the Capital Post of the American Legion.

When I moved to Reno, I immediately rejoined my original post, Darrell Dunkle Number 1 and I was serving from 1928-1933 as Adjutant of the post and also as rehabilitation officer, taking care of the unfortunate veterans who came through our city—the ones seeking help.

In 1934, I ran for the National Executive Committee of the American Legion at our convention. My opponent at that time was George Smilanik of Boulder City. It was the biggest fight the American Legion ever had for an office. Finally, I beat him by 36 votes. I immediately went to the meeting of the Executive Committee of the American Legion in Indianapolis, Indiana, where the American Legion headquarters still is.

After my three days’ meeting of the American Legion, I went to Washington and started the ball rolling to build the Veterans’ Hospital in Reno. I appeared before the Veterans’ Committee of the House of

Representatives and I spoke to them. I said to them that it was time the Nevada veterans were given the same consideration and the same help as the veterans of California. All the states in the Union had hospitals—one and two or more. Nevada—none. If the Committee of the War Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives didn’t believe that the veterans of Nevada were entitled to the same consideration, if the state of Nevada doesn’t belong to the Union, they might as well give it back to the Indians.

I was very interested at that time, because the economic condition of our nation was very bad from 1929 to 1934. A lot of veterans, although disabled through service to our country, had no money to pay their own doctors. (They were sent to the “poor hospital” in Washoe County, which was the poorest hospital we ever had here. I hope we never see it again.) Well, at that time we filed application to send them to San Francisco. They were so weak that most of them died going over the hump. I was determined that such condition must be corrected.

After quite a few years, I succeeded, with the help of our senators and congressmen. At that time, Senator Key Pittman was Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and had quite an influential power on the Administration. So did Senator McCarran and Congressman Scrugham. We met at the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee room. Present were Senator Key Pittman, Congressman Scrugham and Eva Adams representing Senator Pat McCarran because he was in Europe at that time. General Frank D. Hines, then Director of the Veterans’ Administration, came down to the office of Senator Key Pittman in the Foreign Relations room. After we discussed the matter and appealed to General Hines, and described the conditions existing in our state for veterans

assistance, General Hines then and there promised us that he would give us a small hospital to begin with. I believe within the following day or two I received a telegram from Washington announcing that when it was possible there would be in Reno, very shortly, 26 beds.

The government of the United States, in order to build V. A. hospitals, had to have free land in fee simple. The two blocks that are occupied by the Veterans' Administration Hospital were owned by the city of Reno. Under the city charter of the city of Reno, it would not be conveyed to the federal government without receiving 75% of its actual cash value. In addition to that, it was necessary that I receive signatures at least 75% of the resident voters in that particular section of the city before it would be acceptable to the government; or we needed a legislative act by our legislature authorizing and empowering the city of Reno to convey the two city blocks to the federal government for the purpose of erecting the hospital there.

I proposed such legislation. Dick Kirman was governor of the state of Nevada at that time. He made it immediately the number one bill for the legislature. In 40 hours it was passed, ready to be put before the city council. H. E. Stewart at that time was the mayor. The city council approved a deed of conveyance in fee simple. It was airmailed special delivery, registered, to Attorney General Cummings in Washington. That acknowledged that the Veterans' Hospital belonged to the government. Then on December 17, 1937, all the veterans' organizations assembled at the ground and I was honored by breaking the ground for the hospital.

When the deed of conveyance was mailed to Washington, the Attorney General of Nevada, Gray Mashburn, found out that I did not consult him in reference to the

enactment of such a bill. He immediately made an announcement that he would introduce an amendment to the act that "the state of Nevada shall reserve the right to make civil and criminal process on the Veterans Hospital." That would have been unacceptable to the government of the United States. That would have killed the entire program of the hospital. I immediately called for the help of all the veterans of our state. It was such pandemonium that many veterans were even willing to go to Carson City to lynch him! It was tremendously hard on me at that time. Finally, Attorney General Mashburn called me and stated that he would not introduce an amendment to the bill, that he was satisfied with it, and for me not to have the veterans go after him so much. I asked him to wire Attorney General Cummings, and when he had done that, I would ask the veterans to stop. So he did. He immediately sent wires to all the posts of the American Legion, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars that the matter has been settled. The armistice had been signed; stop fighting. That was the only obstacle I had locally pertaining to the building of the hospital.

The other difficulty I had with the hospital at that time was with the friction that existed between Senator Pat McCarran and Senator Key Pittman. I couldn't get them both together to go with me to see General Frank D. Hines or have any conferences together, so I had to use some diplomacy. When Pat McCarran was in Spain arranging for a loan to Franco, I went to Senator Key Pittman and asked if there were any objections if Eva Adams, secretary then to Senator McCarran, could be present during the time General Hines would come to meet us in his office. Pittman had no objection, so then Eva Adams and James Scrugham and Senator Key Pittman and myself and General Frank D. Hines, Director

of Veteran's Administration met in his office. The hospital was finally approved.

On the enlargement of the hospital, I had to have many conferences. Finally, we received an appropriation from Congress of \$1,000,000 for the enlargement. In 1937, the American Legion had its national convention in New York City. At that time, all national officers had free transportation to go to Europe, to France and England, visiting the various cemeteries of World War I veterans there. I had a first-class transportation to go, but during the national convention I had a telephone call from Washington from T. O. Krabbel, Director of the National Rehabilitation Commission of the American Legion. The lowest bid for enlargement of the hospital was \$1,560,000. it was necessary for me to go to Washington immediately to see if we could get the appropriation to give the contract to the McKee Construction Company for the construction of the enlargement of the hospital. So I gave up my trip and went to Washington to spend two weeks—enough to have a conference with Frank D. Hines, Director of the Veteran's Administration, and many others, and the assistants from the American Legion. General Frank D. Hines wanted to have the United States give the money, and we got the appropriation. So the bid for \$1,560,000 was awarded to McKee Construction Company, which enlarged the present hospital facility as it now stands.



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## CONCLUSION

I have two brothers living in Zante, Greece. My youngest brother was killed in the Balkan War. In 1947, I took my first trip back to Greece to visit my brothers and the land where I was born. The conditions in Greece now are far different than when I left as a boy. It was a wonderful experience for me to again swim in the Mediterranean Sea as I did when I was a boy and reminisce about my youthful days. Subsequently, I have made several trips to Greece, but my heart and soul belong to America. America has given me the opportunity to live a decent life, and I, in turn, have dedicated my life to giving a helping hand to my fellow man. The struggle was very difficult and the disappointments many for me, but looking back, I can say it was worth it!

My daughter, Betty Ioanna Lougaris, is married to Eli John Soldo. Everyone calls him Jack. Jack is a graduate of Notre Dame University and now employed by the Douglas Aircraft Company in Long Beach, California as an aeronautical engineer. I am greatly pleased and proud of my son-in-law

for his progress in this company and having served as President in the Toastmasters Club. My wife, Athena, and I are deriving great pleasure and satisfaction in our two grandchildren, Johnny and Marky, who are the love of our lives. Betty has been wonderful and dutiful daughter and has fulfilled all my expectations.

### **OBSERVATIONS AND MY PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE**

In conclusion, may I say that my observation of world conditions is this: Although there has been a great deal of improvement for the betterment of the human race, it still continues in the same historic pattern as it has been for 2,000 years or more. Notwithstanding the great scientific and technological progress made for mankind, political societies fail to observe universal peace. Not until the people of all nations come to a common understanding can we hope to succeed our ultimate goal—and that is UNIVERSAL PEACE.

Directing attention to the value of one solitary man, I quote the words spoken by the Oracle of Delphi, 2,400 years before Christ, “Know Thyself. I have given a great deal of thought to these words. I know who I am, why I’m here, and what I am doing. I have known myself, I have known my fellow men as well. My conscience is clear. I feel I have done my best in a meager way, and I hope to continue to do so for the rest of my life.

**TO THE YOUTH -  
I LEAVE THESE LAST THOUGHTS:**

The world owes every man a living—that is, if he is working and producing. Human rights should not be above property rights. History teaches us that in abuse of property rights, human rights and freedom are lost. In our present political thinking of seeking to solve our present problems through socialistic programs, we are heading down the road of darkness. If we distributed the wealth of our nation equally, it would not solve or alleviate the human problems. If we want true liberty and a fair portion of equality, we must follow the principles of democracy. Generally, the people who are free do not remain economically equal—people who remain economically equal are not free. What do we want? Freedom or economic equality. In communistic countries, you can find economic equality—and EQUALITY IN SLAVERY.



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